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Your Agency

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March XX, 2019**

CONTACT: [Name, Agency, phone #, email address]

**[Your] Police Department challenges drivers to ‘silence’ the distraction**

*April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

[Your City] Calif. – April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and [Your] Police Department will be joining law enforcement agencies statewide stopping drivers who violate California’s hands-free cell phone law.

On April 4 and April 19 [These are statewide enforcement dates. Fill with own date/time if doing on different dates], [Your] Police Department will have additional officers on patrol looking specifically for drivers on their phones.

Last year [or year of most recent data], [Your] Department issued [X] citations to drivers texting, calling or performing another function on their phone. Distracted driving is dangerous, especially when it involves a cell phone. According to preliminary data from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), 66 people were killed and more than 6,500 injured in 2017 from distracted driving-related crashes.

“Cell phones remain one of the top distractions for drivers,” [Your] Police Department [Rank and name]. “Like any bad habit, it can be hard to break, but this habit can have life-altering consequences.”

A 2018 [observational survey](https://www.ots.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/67/2018/11/2018-OTS-Distracted-Driving-Report-updated.pdf) by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) on driver cell phone use found about 4.5 percent of drivers are still using their cell phone illegally, a nearly 27 percent increase from 2017.

“That text or phone call will never be worth losing a life over,” [Your] Police Department [Rank and name]. “That is why curbing distracted driving is high on our priority list.”

Under the most recent cell phone law that went into effect in 2017, drivers are prohibited from having a phone in their hand for any reason and can only use their phone in a hands-free manner. The phones must be mounted on the dashboard, windshield or center console, and can only be touched once with the swipe or tap of a finger to activate or deactivate a function. First-time offenders face a [$162 fine](http://gosafelyca.org/cell-phone-law/).

If you need to make a call or text someone, pull over and park at a safe location. Struggling to stay off the phone while driving? Put your phone in a place you can’t reach, like the backseat or trunk.

Funding for distracted driving enforcement operations are provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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